

DESIGN & INTERIORS

# SETTING *the tone*





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*Laura Hammett's classic designs balance the requirements of contemporary living with attention to detail to create stunning luxury interiors. Julia Millen spoke to the inspirational designer to find out how she exceeds clients' expectations*

#### WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN INTERIOR DESIGN?

Interiors have always been a passion of mine before I even knew that it was a career opportunity. Despite being born into a family of artists, I didn't come from a world of interior designed homes, but as a teenager I visited the home of my mother's architect friend in France and remember being absolutely mesmerised by how unique it was; the clean lines and unusual room layouts with a very contemporary bath sunk into the floor. It was like nothing I'd ever seen before and felt more like an art installation than a home. That definitely ignited something in me.

#### HOW HAS YOUR STYLE EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?

My personal style is constantly evolving, and for me that's what keeps this industry so exciting. I could never be the kind of designer who has a set aesthetic across all projects. The growth of our studio and client base has naturally pushed me

in different directions, starting with working for families in west London, then on to prestigious commissions in Prime Central London and now expanding internationally. I source my inspiration by really immersing myself in new styles and although the core of our brand aesthetic is recognisable, how those principles are applied to individual clients and locations is becoming more and more varied, particularly with our current projects, as we're working across 10 different countries. Experience naturally adds layers to your design aesthetic.

#### WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION?

I'd say from pretty much everywhere, but for design details particularly bars, restaurants and hotels. I'm a bore to go out with, because I photograph everything, but thankfully I've married a man who is exactly the same. In fact, we bonded on our first date over our appreciation of the tableware design in the restaurant. However, details are incredibly important, for me. Design is so much about the feeling that a space evokes. So I often find myself drawing inspiration from





a texture or colour combination, or the lighting mood of a space. In my opinion, places like Pinterest should be used to articulate individual ideas, rather than a source to find them.

#### HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR DESIGNS FRESH?

This global industry is bursting with variety and I think if you're fully immersed in it as a whole, you will naturally keep your own designs fresh. Social media is a blessing and a curse for creativity, but if used in the right way, I think it can be a great source. I follow lots of international designers and as many different styles as I can, often quite different from my own, as well as other different design sectors. I think it's so important to see that variety to keep your perspective fresh and carve your own evolving aesthetic, as you will naturally absorb different elements from them all.

#### WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE PROJECT TO DATE?

That's a hard one because there have been so many that I love for different reasons. Sometimes it's the project scope and the generous budget which allows us to really push the design further, such as our very masculine and luxurious Berkeley Square townhouse project, but there are certain clients that really make this job so rewarding on a personal level. We worked for many years with a family on the Isle of Man to create their long-awaited dream home. They had moved from quite a modest property and had worked incredibly hard, so as clichéd as it sounds, there's nothing quite like helping to make people's dreams come true.

#### HOW HAS THE DESIGN LANDSCAPE IN LONDON CHANGED SINCE THE PANDEMIC?

We've noticed a big shift in many ways, not just relating to Covid, but a heightened consciousness when it comes to how people are choosing to live their lives and to spend their money. Sustainability and ethics of materials and products are now at the forefront of people's minds in a way we haven't seen before. The lack of diversity within the interior design industry has also come to light for so many of us as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement dominating in recent months. I'm very proud to be involved with a fantastic new charity called United in Design and we will be offering mentoring and an apprenticeship in 2021 within our studio, along with many other leading studios in London. It's all feeling very positive and I really hope it continues.

#### WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR RECONFIGURING A HOME POST-LOCKDOWN?

I have actually just moved house myself and having lived in an open plan space for so long, we found ourselves really drawn to separate rooms at our new house. This is something that we're hearing from clients too, the ability to be able to zone off a home that they're sharing with other family members more of the time, and of course working from home. The home office has always been a key aspect for our clients, because many of them are business owners, so whether it be their primary residence or a second or third home, a private working space is essential. Separate kids' areas are also becoming more popular. Not all homes have the space for dedicated rooms, but there are so many ways

you can create separated or partitioned space. Screens are a great way to create a division and sliding pocket doors give the flexibility of openness with privacy when it's needed.

#### WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

We've taken on some really exciting commissions over the last few months, including a 13,000 square foot private villa in Cap d'Antibes. It's our second project in the South of France and the design is very rustic Provençal in style but with all of the luxuries you would expect from a magnificent property. We are also completing some longer term projects such as a 12,000 square foot Grade I listed townhouse in a very notable square in Central London, a large duplex in Hong Kong and a traditional Haussmann apartment in Paris.

#### WHAT ARE THE THEMES AND COLOUR TEMPLATES FOR THE COMING YEAR?

I don't tend to follow trends, so can only really comment on what I'm enjoying at the moment. For me, it's all about layering texture, unusual materials and sculptural furniture forms to create a dynamic space but in an understated way. I love an interior to slowly reveal itself to you as you take in its details, rather than be too overpowering.

#### WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE FOR 2021?

We have lots of great projects drawing to a close, as well as some very exciting ones about to launch. I can't say much about it now, but I've been working on a particular commission behind the scenes for several years and it's been a real labour of love. I can't wait to finally be able to share it.

